

HENRY FOXHALL HOUSE
3123 O Street, N.W.
Georgetown, D. C.

HABS No. 66

HABS
DC
GEO
54-

PHOTOGRAPHS

District of Columbia

Historic American Buildings Survey
Delos H. Smith, District Officer
1707 I St., N.W., Washington, D.C.

ADDENDUM TO:
HENRY FOXHALL HOUSE
(McKenny House)
Georgetown
3123 Dumbarton Street, Northwest
Washington
District of Columbia

HABS DC-66
DC, GEO, 54-

PHOTOGRAPHS

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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

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FIELD RECORDS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

Addendum to HENRY FOXALL HOUSE (McKenny House)

HABS NO. DC-66

Location: 3123 Dumbarton Street, N.W., Washington, D.C.

Present Owner: Eden and Gerald Rafshoon

Present Use: private residence

Significance: The Henry Foxall (McKenney) House's primary significance is as an outstanding example of the late Federal period architecture in transition to early classical revival style. The gardens were designed by Rose Greely, an early and important woman landscape architect (the first licensed in the District of Columbia), further enhancing the importance of the house and grounds. Although not his residence, the house also derives significance from its association with Henry Foxall, a mayor of Georgetown and munitions manufacturer.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: Most, if not all, older publications on Georgetown architecture date this house to 1800 as a wedding gift from Henry Foxall to his daughter Mary Ann and his son-in-law Samuel McKenney (in some publications spelt McKenny). But definitive research by the late Mathilde D. Williams, curator, Peabody Room, Georgetown Branch of D.C. Public Library refutes that date and establishes a more accurate approximate date of between 1812 and 1819. Williams determined that (1) the marriage did not occur to 1813, (2) although Foxall started negotiating for the parcel in 1810, he did not acquire it until 1812, and (3) only in 1819 was Samuel McKenney assessed for "new building on Dumbarton Street." It seems reasonable to assume that the house was built closer to 1819 than 1812 as assessments after 1812 and before 1819 don't list the house and the size of the rooms seems more consistent with classical revival rather than Federal period houses.

2. Original and subsequent owners:
(Lot 42 in Thomas Beall's 1st Addition to Georgetown)

| | |
|------|---|
| 1785 | Deed (Sept. 10, 1785) Thomas Beall To Thomas Tingey |
| 1805 | Deed (M 196) Thomas Tingey To Richard Beck |
| 1810 | Mortgage (Y 192) Richard Beck, ux Rebecca To Henry Foxall |
| 1812 | Deed (AC 407, March 11, 1812) Henry Foxall To Richard Parrott |
| 1812 | Deed (AC 416, March 12, 1812) Richard Parrott To Henry Foxall |
| 1936 | Deed (6998, 159) Charles H. Cragin, widower To Wilmer Latimer, American Security and Trust Co. |
| 1944 | Deed (7967, 325) Wilmer Latimer To Frances Healy Holliday |
| 1945 | Deed (8110, 461) Frances Healy Holliday To Royal R. Sayers |

| | |
|------|---|
| 1946 | Deed (8342, 492) Royal R. Sayers To Jack Garrett Scott |
| 1946 | Deed (8529,496) Jack Garrett Scott To Kenyon C. Bolton, ux Mary P. |
| 1956 | Deed (6361) Kenyon C. Bolton, ux Mary P. To Gilbert C. Greenway, ux Lucia T. |
| 1996 | Gilbert Greenway to Eden and Gerald Rafshoon |

This chain of title is based on two documents from the Peabody Room, with intermediate deeds (such as trusts) omitted. It should be noted that the Foxall-McKenney family ownership lasted until in 1944 when Latimer, whose wife was a great-granddaughter of Henry Foxall, sold the house. Mrs. Rafshoon confirmed a newspaper account that she and her husband purchased the house in 1996.

3. Builder, contractor, suppliers: No information available.

4. Original plans and construction: No information available.

5. Alterations and additions: Building permits and the records of the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts document an addition of a one story bathroom structure at the rear of the house in 1957 and a major restoration in 1996 to designs by Muse Architects. The exterior restoration included adding the northern window in the dining room, where the previous owner had an elevator and repairing the roof. Interior work included repairing and repainting of features (e.g., windows, cabinets, and stairs) and refinishing floors, plus installing a new kitchen and removing a section of the wall between the kitchen and sitting room, and selected demolition in the basement and second floor to allow reconfiguration of the space. A major interior aspect of the 1996 project was the removal of the elevator at the northwest corner of the main block of the house. As this elevator chase was in the corner of the dining room, Muse had had to add new flooring (to match original), add a window, and box out the corner in that room. Two new brick walls replacing existing walls were erected behind the driveway. In 1997 the sidewalk retaining wall, which had collapsed, was replaced by a new stone wall, matching the old wall.

The building permits, issued in 1945 and 1946, appear to be primarily repair and plumbing work.

Muse's design also called for adding three windows on the first floor of the east facade to complement the one existing window, so that windows would flank the two fireplaces. This was not implemented as The Foundation For Preservation of Historic Georgetown, which holds a facade easement on the property, would not approve the proposed work. According to Mrs. Rafshoon, the foundation said there was no evidence of other windows having been on that facade.

B. Historical Context:

While many of the early nineteenth-century houses in Georgetown have had several owners and have even been rental properties for at least a few years during the twentieth century, Foxall House remained in the family for more than 125 years. In that regard Foxall House shares the rare company of Tudor Place (see HABS No. DC-171), and also like Tudor Place, it was associated with an early mayor of Georgetown. Henry Foxall served in that capacity from 1819-1821, according to Richard P. Jackson ("The Chronicles of Georgetown, D.C., 1751-1878", 1878, Washington, D.C.)¹ Foxall did not live at this house and in fact he owned two other properties in Georgetown. His winter or "intown" home was near the wharves and his summer or country home was a farm near present day Foxhall Road. Instead, he purchased this parcel and had the house built for his daughter Mary Ann and her husband Samuel McKenney, a Georgetown merchant. In addition to public service as mayor, Foxall also donated land and paid for the erection of Methodist churches, including one in Georgetown for "colored people." An Englishman, he made his money producing cannon, cannon shot, and gun carriages for the United States government. Supposedly during the War of 1812 the British soldiers after burning the Capitol and the White House, set out to burn his Columbian Foundry near Georgetown in 1814, but bad weather deterred them. In gratitude for divine intervention, Foxall gave the second church, Foundry Chapel. Foxall sold the foundry in 1815 and returned to England at least twice after the War of 1812, and he died there in 1823.

Kenyon Bolton was not the first non-family member to own the house, but he was the first credited with restoring the house, and commissioning Rose Greely to design the gardens. Not only was Greely an important early woman landscape architect in Washington, but her formal landscape plan is a key design element of this property. A Georgetown resident, she was responsible for many local gardens in the mid-twentieth century. Bolton's mother was a congresswoman from Cleveland, Ohio, who lived here, further enhancing the historical importance of the house. Bolton owned the property from 1946 to 1956 and at some point during the 1950s assistant secretary of state George Perkins was a tenant.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

¹ Another source stated that he was mayor slightly later.

1. Architectural Character: The Foxall House is a large three story dwelling with some Federal Period characteristics. Executed in flemish bond on the south (main) facade with contrasting stone lintels with bullseyes, double end wall chimneys, dormer windows with arched tracery, and main door with fanlight and sidelights, the house, appears as a late Federal period dwelling where the thin classically inspired detailing seen in Charles Bulfinch work is no longer as popular and, therefore, not repeated here. Yet the characteristic detailing of the succeeding style, the more archeologically correct classical revival (Greek or Roman), such as the temple front or temple front porch, has not taken hold, except for the interior proportions. (In fact, the porch is out of keeping with the massing and detailing of the house and probably dates to the mid-twentieth century when the Greely landscaping was done. The wide porch, with thin columns and pediment, actually relates better to the bifurcated steps to the porch than it does to the house. Like Tudor Place, a classical sensitivity is reflected in the great height of the rooms, perhaps as tall as 14 feet, combined with the generous width and depth of the rooms.

2. Condition of fabric: The house and gardens are in excellent condition. The owners, as discussed above, undertook extensive restorations, removing later interior accretions and signs of wear.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: With a full height basement and attic, this house is four stories and approximately 40 feet to the ridge, and nearly square as it is 50 feet wide and 40 feet deep, with a two story rear ell.

2. Foundations: Brick.

3. Walls: The front elevation is Flemish bond, while the others are irregular American bond.

4. Structural system, framing: It is assumed that the system is heavy timber framing.

5. Porches, stoops: A wide, low pedimented porch supported by four thin columns and two half-round pilasters shelters the front door. Unlike most porches that only cover the door and any side lights, this porch runs to the inside jamb of either flanking window. As stated earlier, the unusual proportions and apparent relationship to the bifurcated steps suggest that the porch is mid -twentieth century rather than being original to the house. A balustrade runs between the columns. The soffit of the porch is arched to allow for the fanlight, and like Bodisco House (HABS No. DC-174) and the Laird-Dunlop House (HABS No. DC-630) the soffit is finished in stucco.

6. Chimneys: Each end wall (east and west facades) has a tall rectangular chimney to either side of the gable peak for a total of four chimneys. A small chimney for the kitchen is at the north end of the ell.

7. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: The front door is a traditional Federal period door consisting of a single door, two square panels at the top and four vertical panels below with a tall lock rail. The door is flanked by sidelights above wooden panels and a fanlight above the door. The handsome fanlight have the traditional radiating mullions, but the more dramatic feature is the fluted s-shaped corbel keystone. On axis with this door is the six paneled door to the backyard. While the panels on the interiors of these two doors are plain raised panels, the exterior side panels have concave curves at each corner. The doors in the ell are of secondary merit.

b. Windows: All windows have flat heads and those on the front elevation (facing south) are decorated with stone lintels terminated in bullseyes. The basement windows have surprisingly substantial lintels. The windows are six over six, and flanked by shutters. A few windows on the west facade at the basement level and in the ell lack shutters or are not six over six sash.

8. Roof:

a. Shape, covering: The gable of the main block runs parallel to the street while the gable of the ell runs perpendicular to the main block. The roofs are covered in slate, which was repaired as part of the recent restoration.

b. Cornice, eaves: On the front elevation, the first level of cornice is a row of bricks set forward of the facade approximately half a depth of the brick. Above that course is a concave brick that projects forward above the curve. The next course is in the plane of the top of the concave brick. The top course projects further forward and is a boltel molding. On the rear facade, a mouse tooth cornice is below the gutter.

c. Dormers: There are three dormers on the south elevation and two on the north. Each dormer has a broken bed pediment supported by simple, thin pilasters. The most notable feature is the upper sash with gracefully arched mullions.

C. Description of the Interior:

1. Floor plans:

a. Basement: The basement is under the main block and has a central hall with two large rooms to either side. The two east rooms are boiler and storage, while the west rooms are laundry and staff room, with a bathroom and furnace room created between these two rooms.

b. First floor: The front door opens onto a hall running the depth of the house. An arch divides this space into a foyer in front and stair hall in the rear. The foyer opens onto a library on the left and that library opens onto the dining room, which in turn opens onto the stair hall,

directly in front of the stairs. The foyer opens onto a living room on the right and behind the living room is the music room. The rooms flow into each other as the opening between these two rooms is only reduced by the width of two stub walls. The rooms are 19 feet 1 inch wide and the opening is approximately 13 feet.

c. Second floor and attic not viewed.

2. Stairway: An open-string, open-well stairs climbs along the west side of the stair hall. A simple, turned, capped with a ball, newel initiates the balustrade of three square (in plan) balusters per tread and as the balustrade turns at the first landing, there is a second turned newel with a pendant. The string below each tread has incised "c" curve, with the bottom of the string starting with a dropped rectangle moving into a curve and ending in two convex drops separated by a concave curve. Below the string course, the wall is paneled.

A tight secondary or servants' stairs is off the corridor between the dining room and the sitting room in the ell.

3. Flooring: The floors are wide boards running east-west in the four rooms off the hall and north-south in the hall (foyer and stair hall). As part of the recent restoration floor boards had to be added in the northwest corner of the dining room where the elevator chase had been, and the floors were refinished.

4. Wall and ceiling finish: The walls and ceilings are plaster, with built up cornices that vary from room to room. In the library, the cornice projects from the wall, curves in a concave at the intersection of the wall and ceiling, then has rows of beading along the ceiling, proceeds to a frieze, and then ends in a squared off profile and ends in a canted edge. The adjacent room, the dining room has a simpler cornice, which steps out three times from the wall to the ceiling, with beading before each step. The cornice in the living room and music room is similar to the library in that the transition from wall to ceiling is achieved by a concave curving. The cornice in the hall also lacks this concave profile, but is more built up than in the other rooms.

All rooms have tall baseboards, with those in the hall having more three-dimensional profile.

5. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: The front door and the rear or garden door are paneled. The large lockbox on the front door is not original to the door as the keyhole openings do not correspond. The side lights to either side of the front door have louvered interior shutters that are held in place by apparently original turning latches. The jambs of the front door architrave are fluted. The molding of the interior openings is substantial, working from a recessed panel to bead, frieze, bead, frieze, and then a grouping of projecting profiles.

b. Windows: Each window has a paneled reveal and fully developed window surround, that is to say that the surrounds are beaded and have a lip at the outer edge. These window panel reveals echo the door reveals.

6. Decorative features and trim: The foyer is visually separated from the stair hall by a paneled arch. Elegant fluted, convex pilasters flanking a mullion support the arch (up to the impost and the arch is paneled above). At the center of the intrados, a metal medallion survives, the remnant no doubt of a hanging lamp or chandelier. The foyer and stair hall have other decorative features such as the paneled dado with incised garland pattern in the frieze below the cornice.

Each room has a tall wooden fireplace surrounding the slate around the opening. The library has the most attenuated and primitive of the fireplaces, with fluted pilasters supporting an entablature with a double pulvinated frieze, that is to say one horizontal convex molding above the other. The cornice above consists of a row of dentils with stepped out cymaticum. The other three fireplaces are better proportioned, more sophisticated and nearly identical. The fluted pilasters support an entablature with the end block filled either with a raised, fluted oval or recessed panel with a segmental arched top. The frieze between the end blocks is the most interesting and intricate detail of the fireplace as it has a central section flanked by panels with sunbursts. The central panel has 17 vertical flutes flanked by 16 diagonal flutes, and these diagonals form interrupted chevrons.

7. Hardware: As mentioned above, the front door lockbox appears old, but not original to that door and the only old hardware seems to be on the shutters for the sidelights.

8. Mechanical systems: The house has central forced air heating and air conditioning; ducts for system are visible in the floors.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The parcel is substantially above the street level. Stone and brick stairs climb past the retaining wall, with fence and gate, to a point where the path is bifurcated forming a stepped oval, with angled corners, up to the wooden stairs up to the wooden porch. At the east side of the oval, another path leads east to the formally landscaped section of the east lawn closest to the street. As the garden moves north from the street its path meanders and the garden becomes much less formal. It again becomes formal (and manicured) along the northern edge of the east lawn in an east-west direction and in the two stone terraces directly behind the houses. This lawn treatment strongly resembles parts of the grounds of Evermay (See HABS No. DC- 61) and Joanne Lawson, landscape architect and expert on Rose Greely can document both gardens as well as that at the Jeremiah Williams House (See HABS No. DC-827) to Ms. Greely, an architect as well as a landscape architect, who worked for the prominent Washington architect Horace Peaslee (see Bowie-Sevier, HABS No. DC-60 and

Meridian Hill, HABS No. DC-532), and achieved local prominence on her own as a landscape architect. (Ms. Greely's residence was a block north on O Street.) Ms. Lawson said Greely designed the gardens at the Henry Foxall House for Kenyon Bolton who owned the property from 1946-1956.

2. Historic landscape design: Unknown.

3. Outbuildings: Muse Architects designed a small gable roofed, wooden storage structure at the northwest garden of the lot.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Much of the information for this property was taken from the file at the Peabody Room of the Georgetown Branch of the D.C. Public Library. Information on Henry Foxall came from The Records of the Columbia Historical Society (vol. XI, pages 16-70, 1908, "The Old Cannon Foundry Above Georgetown, D.C. and Its First Owner, Henry Foxall", a paper by Madison Davis, read before the society on February 11, 1907). Joanne Lawson generously shared her knowledge of Rose Greely, who the subject of an exhibition and article by Lawson. The exhibition was at the Historical Society of Washington and her article, published in the society's record was cited in HABS No. DC- 827. Muse Architects supplied Lebovich with a set of drawings, which provided much important information about the existing condition of the house and the firm's renovation of the property.

Mrs. Rafshoon, made important contributions, supplementing the information gleaned from other sources.

Prepared by: Bill Lebovich, architectural historian, March 2000

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

The Georgetown Documentation Project was sponsored by the Commission of Fine Arts and undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER) of the National Park Service. Principals involved were Charles H. Atherton, Secretary, U.S. Commission of Fine Arts, and E. Blaine Cliver, Chief, HABS/HAER. The documentation was undertaken in two phases. The summer 1998 team was supervised by John P. White, FAIA, Professor of Architecture, Texas Tech University; and architecture technicians Robert C. Anderson, Boston Architectural Center; Aimee Charboneau, Tulane University; Irwin J. Gueco, The Catholic University of America; and Adam Maksay, United States/International Council on Monuments and Sites (US/ICOMOS) architect from the Transylvania Trust. Historic research was initiated by Bryan C. Green, historian, Richmond, Virginia, during this summer. The summer 1999 team was supervised by Roger S. Miller,

architect, Alexandria, Virginia, and architecture technicians David Benton, The Catholic University of America; Edward Byrdy, The Catholic University of America; Irwin J. Gueco, The Catholic University of America; and Clara Albert, US/ICOMOS architect from the Transylvania Trust. The project historian, and author of the written reports, was William Lebovich, architectural historian, Chevy Chase, Maryland. The photography was undertaken by Jack E. Boucher, HABS staff photographer, and James Rosenthal, photographic assistant.